United Nations S/PV.6551

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6551 st meeting

Thursday, 9 June 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Messone	(Gabon)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Tian Lin
	Colombia	Mr. Alzate
	France	Mr. Briens
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	India	Mr. Vinay Kumar
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Ms. Rulumeni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mr. Dunn

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2011/298)

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11-36878 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2011/298)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Roger Meece, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/298, containing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Meece.

Mr. Meece (*spoke in French*): I have the great honour to address the Council in the framework of the consultations on the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/298) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In that regard, I express my appreciation of the important discussion that took place in the Council on 18 May (see S/PV.6539) on developments in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and prospects for the future. That debate was distinguished by the presence of Mr. Raymond Tshibanda, Minister for International and Regional Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other eminent guests who presented their views on the issue. My briefing falls within the framework of the Security Council's impending consideration of the renewal of the MONUSCO mandate, which expires on 30 June.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who offered condolences and support to the Mission in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy on 4 April, during which a United Nations aircraft suffered a fatal accident at N'Djili Airport in Kinshasa. I would like to note the long hours and extraordinary work performed by many in the Mission and Congolese in different capacities to manage the crisis and address the needs of the victims of the accident, as well as their families, friends and colleagues. I would also note that the investigation of the accident is ongoing.

As was noted in the 18 May consultations and in the Secretary-General's last report (S/2011/20), there has been significant progress regarding the security situation in recent years in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; however, there is still much to be done. In my view, the security environment and the related threat to the civilian population — our highest priority concern — must be viewed on a localized basis to obtain a full understanding of the remaining threats, the relevant factors affecting the situation, and the options available for action to address the problem.

In Orientale province in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to pose the primary threat to the population. We agree with Congolese and Ugandan assessments that the number of LRA combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at this point limited and that they tend to be poorly equipped and supplied. Nonetheless, they continue to use very brutal tactics, and their cross-border movements between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Southern Sudan make them particularly difficult to deal with. Since 2010, we have stepped up MONUSCO military operations in the affected area, in coordination with Congolese and Ugandan forces, and as a result we believe that we have successfully forestalled some of the larger-scale LRA attacks. The Dungu-based joint intelligence and operations centre — staffed by Congolese, Ugandan and MONUSCO military personnel — has helped to coordinate information and operations.

The reality is, however, that the LRA continues to pose a major threat to civilians in areas where they operate. I believe the only strategy that will

significantly reduce or eliminate the LRA as an ongoing threat in the region is one that focuses on the LRA leadership, three members of whom are under indictment by the International Criminal Court. That strategy, however, requires a broad effort that goes beyond MONUSCO's scope and mandate, but which we are ready to support to the maximum extent possible.

North and South Kivu provinces present a more complex picture, with an interaction among various armed groups. Of these, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) retains the greatest military capacity, albeit greatly reduced from its peak. The weakened state of the FDLR does present opportunities, as evidenced in the encouraging numbers of combatants repatriated in recent months, including a significantly increased number of FDLR holding more senior rank. The recent arrest by Congolese authorities of Bernard Munyagishari and his pending transfer to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha is a further encouraging step. We are continuing to explore actively with Congolese authorities opportunities to accelerate a decrease in FDLR capacity as quickly and effectively as possible to address this long-standing threat to the security of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Another significant security issue in the Kivus is the incomplete integration of combatants from armed groups into the Congolese army, particularly some military members of the Congrès national pour la défense du people, who have retained parallel command and control structures. It is essential that this situation be addressed in order for security conditions to improve to a satisfactory level in the Kivus. We are continuing our dialogue with Congolese Government authorities on this subject. Other armed groups, including the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda, continue to prey on the civilian population in the Kivus. Some Mayi-Mayi groups receive encouragement and support from FDLR elements, as well as non-integrated combatants. However, none of these groups constitutes the same level of military and organizational capabilities as the FDLR.

Major improvements have been seen in Ituri district of Orientale province in recent years, although some residual militia activity continues. Encouragingly, some recent apparent attempts to recruit new militia elements or form new groups have not been very successful, with growing signs that local communities recognize that such activity brings only ongoing violence. The increased cooperation of the population with Congolese security forces and MONUSCO to counter militia elements is a key and encouraging sign for future long-term security in Ituri.

The joint assessment process established last year pursuant to resolution 1925 (2010) has been a very positive exercise for us and Congolese authorities to enhance our dialogue, to assess security threats, and to arrive at a common analysis of the situation on the ground. I believe that it would be useful to continue this process during the next phase of MONSUCO's mandate, and it clearly will be a key resource for looking at any future configuration and deployment of MONUSCO forces based on existing security conditions.

I am obliged to note that MONUSCO's military operations are being negatively impacted by a shortage of military helicopters. With the scheduled departure of the remaining combat helicopters in early July, this problem will become worse absent new contributions. I am very appreciative of a recent commitment from South Africa to provide an additional military utility helicopter, and very much hope that ongoing discussions with other Member States will yield timely and positive results. Filling the gaps in MONUSCO's helicopter capabilities will be critical to maintaining the Mission's efforts in the protection of civilians and other core mandated tasks.

There has been a great deal of international and domestic Congolese attention to the illegal exploitation of mineral resources in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and specifically the involvement of armed groups in their mining and trade. I believe it important that the efforts of various countries internationally be coordinated to the maximum extent possible with regional and Congolese national efforts to ensure that desired common objectives are achieved. In helping to tackle this issue, MONUSCO is continuing the trading counters — or centres de négoces — programme with the Government, establishing centres where such minerals can be certified as originating from legitimate mining operations. Much more needs to be done to address this complex issue, and I hope that national, regional, and international efforts will progress rapidly and in harmony to produce concrete positive results.

For tackling illegal exploitation of mineral resources, as with all regional security issues, the greatly improved dialogue and ongoing contacts between the countries of the region are of critical importance. There are ongoing bilateral and regional contacts on a regular basis, which could not be said five or 10 years ago, and these are essential to achieving continuing progress in improving security conditions throughout the region, including eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We will continue to support and facilitate such contacts as may be useful and desired by the countries involved. Similarly, increased attention from the African Union on regional issues, and particularly on the regional threat of activities by the Lord's Resistance Army, is welcome — and, hopefully, will increase the effectiveness of efforts to address this threat to security in the region.

As Council members are aware, preparations for the very important next cycle of national and provincial elections have been under way for some time. Voter registration has been completed in two provinces, and is currently ongoing in all other areas of the country. Well over half of the projected total of 31 million eligible voters have already been registered. In addition, the election timetable has been announced by the Commission electorale nationale indépendante (CENI) for presidential, national, legislative, provincial and local elections, with presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for 28 November. I am also pleased to note the recent passage by the National Assembly of needed new electoral legislation. I urge the rapid adoption by the Senate as well of this essential measure. MONUSCO has been actively supporting the electoral process — transporting thousands of tons of materials, providing ongoing technical support in a variety of areas and generally facilitating elections preparations.

The election timetable is very ambitious, as the Election Commission sought to accommodate constitutionally mandated requirements for the presidential elections to be held this year while preserving the important coupling of presidential and national legislative elections. The timetable was announced after extensive consultations by the CENI president with a broad range of political parties and civil society representatives. MONUSCO, together with the United Nations Development Programme, is fully committed to providing all possible support to help ensure a successful electoral cycle in accordance with the CENI timetable.

We are of course facing challenges in our tasks. While we have thus far been able to utilize the Mission's financial resources for elections support, that will not be possible for the next budgetary year without an unacceptably negative impact on other mandated operations. We will need supplementary financial resources, which are currently being defined with the relevant United Nations budget authorities. The national elections budget established by CENI has received good support to date, with 60 per cent of the total committed by the Congolese Government and much of the remainder covered by generous pledges by international partners. Continued engagement by international partners, however, is required to ensure full funding of all aspects of the electoral process. It is also critically important that an adequate number of international and national observers are deployed. I welcome expressions of intent from a number of organizations in that regard, including the European Union and the Carter Center.

Electoral security also remains a concern. MONUSCO has been providing refresher training to some of the Congolese National Police, who have the primary legal responsibility for elections security. An important initiative is also under way for the training of 10 Police d'intervention rapide units specifically for elections security. Two of those will be trained and equipped by France, two others by the Congolese Government and six by MONSUCO. The Mission is not, however, authorized to provide equipment for those six units. I urge all Member States to consider funding or providing in-kind contributions to meet their equipment needs so that they can carry out their tasks.

I also note with concern a number of reported incidents in the past several months of harassment, intimidation or violence centred on electoral activities, particularly those involving opposition parties. Government leaders, including President Kabila, have reiterated to me and others their commitment to ensuring free, peaceful and fair conditions for the elections. We will continue an active dialogue with all involved to ensure proper and favourable conditions for the holding of credible and transparent elections. In that regard, last April, MONUSCO chaired with CENI an elections colloquium involving all major parties and civil society to discuss how to best achieve a peaceful

and open elections process and promote dialogue among all involved. The meeting was very successful. In follow-up, an update to the elections code of conduct for political parties is being prepared. Other related activities on the national and provincial levels have been held or are being planned. We have also indicated our support to CENI for the establishment of a mediation committee to address disputes, as provided in the legislation establishing the Commission.

I would like to emphasize the critical importance of the upcoming elections. We have no illusions regarding the magnitude of the challenges of organizing successful elections. There are no guarantees of success. However, all of the risk factors that we see today were also present during the 2006 election cycle. Many in and outside of the Democratic Republic of the Congo predicted the failure of those elections. They were wrong. I know of no reason at this point why Congolese elections for the next election cycle cannot represent the kind of democratic and successful exercise that the Congolese nation and people both deserve and need. I would call on all the parties to take the necessary steps to ensure that the upcoming elections are conducted in a peaceful, democratic and successful manner. I strongly urge the Council's continued support for the process and for MONUSCO's essential support role.

Before concluding, I would like to note the importance of the United Nations continuing efforts regarding stabilization related activities that are also essential for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's future success. Those include continued progress in implementing the International Security and Stabilization Programme in support of the stabilization and reconstruction plan for areas emerging from armed conflict initiative in the east, for which more funding is needed. I am pleased to note good progress towards the formal adoption of a peace consolidation programme encompassing stabilization and development activities in the western parts of the country. I hope that this initiative will spur additional resource mobilization for urgently needed activities in those parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. International and Regional Cooperation Minister Tshibanda spoke of the status and importance of those programs during the 18 May discussion. I fully concur with his statements.

I must stress the particular importance of further strengthening the capabilities and functions of the Congolese National Police, which the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has requested MONUSCO to support. I welcome the encouraging recent passage of legislation by the National Assembly that provides for the role, responsibilities and structure of the Congolese National Police. We are very much committed to expanding police capacity and are conducting a range of programmes. However, they are limited by insufficient resources and cannot meet the requests of the Government. While expressing full appreciation to those partners already engaged in funding Congolese National Police programmes, I would like to appeal again to all potential donors to fund additional police training and equipment programmes. I assure the Council of our eagerness to make effective use of the resources committed.

I also would like to stress the importance of reinforced efforts to strengthen judicial and military institutions. The growing number of military trials of security personnel, including officers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), who have been found guilty of serious abuses, including rape and other gender-based violence, has been very encouraging. This is critical to ending impunity, and the work of a number of military prosecutors and their staff is most commendable. However, capacity overall in both the civilian and military justice systems is still weak. We in MONUSCO are committed, with the support of other partners, including Canada and the United States, to the joint prosecution support cell initiative and other programmes that support the work of FARDC investigators, prosecutors and judges. However, more is needed. In that regard, I very much encourage and welcome additional partner engagement in those areas, as well as for the important corrections sector.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, allow me to take this opportunity to thank the personnel of MONUSCO and United Nations agencies for their unstinting devotion and support to the Mission. Their work has made a crucial contribution — and I am sure it will continue to do so — to the peace process, the holding of elections and, more generally, to the goal of peace and security in the region, which the Congolese people need so much. I should like to conclude by noting the outstanding progress made by partner countries, and especially by the Congolese themselves. The support of the Council and the various international partners has been crucial in the search for lasting peace, security

and economic revival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(*spoke in English*)

I thank the Council for its continuing support.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Meece for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would like at the outset to say how pleased I am to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council in the month of June. I am all the more pleased that it is under the presidency of a noble son of Central Africa that the Council will consider the future of the long partnership between my country and the United Nations, which aims to restore the Democratic Republic of the Congo to its rightful place in the community of nations.

I would also like to commend your predecessor, Sir, the Permanent Representative of France, for the knowledge and expertise that he demonstrated last month in managing the complex issues under the purview of the Security Council.

Lastly, I would like to recognize the essential nature of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/2011/298, of 12 May 2011, on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I thank the Secretary-General and I express my appreciation for the briefing just given to us by his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Roger Meece, whose presence among us today I welcome.

On 18 May, the Security Council held an important meeting that allowed us to reach the necessary consensus on the progress achieved and on identifying challenges on the path towards stabilization and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/PV.6539). I will not revisit the fruitful exchanges that took place during the meeting, which allowed us to forge a three-fold consensus between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Security Council, namely, on the progress achieved towards the normalization of the situation in the country; on the obstacles that continue to stand in the way of that normalization, which require our urgent common attention; and, on the basis of that dual assessment, consensus on future United Nations action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the basis of MONUSCO's mandate.

I will now briefly touch upon a number of elements contained in the report under consideration that seem to me to be essential.

I turn first to the issue of elections, the holding of which under the best possible conditions will undoubtedly be the primary immediate challenge for the Government and the international community. It is now up to the Congolese political class and the Commission electorale nationale indépendante (CENI) not only to accelerate the preparations for elections due to be held in line with the established timeline and within the constitutional deadlines, but also to administer this process in a peaceful climate. With regard to the expected role to be played by the United Nations, I would like to reiterate the request of the Government for MONUSCO's logistical and technical support to CENI.

To that end, the United Nations Mission has told us that it has drawn up a plan that will require additional resources. This morning, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reiterated his appeal in that regard. We have understood that they will be forthcoming. We trust that the United Nations will respond favourably. I can assure the Council that, as a Member of the United Nations and as the country most directly involved, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will shoulder all obligations stemming from this plan. We have no doubt that all of the States Members of the Organization will do likewise. Some of them have already done so, and we are grateful to them for that.

Secondly, with regard to the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, in paragraph 83 of his report, the Secretary-General recommends that MONUSCO's mandate be extended by a further period of 12 months. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo supports that recommendation and also calls for a renewal of the pertinent provisions contained in paragraphs 6 and 7 of resolution 1925 (2010), which, with a view to the progressive and orderly withdrawal of MONUSCO, mandates the joint assessment team with helping in the taking of common decisions regarding the configuration of the United Nations

mission that will best respond to the new challenges facing us on the ground.

I would like to reiterate here that, as a responsible partner, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo assures the Security Council that it has no intention of weakening the consolidation of the security situation under way. The Government is fully aware that it needs the manifold assistance of the United Nations and, to that end, is willing to discuss this matter with the Council. It is therefore incumbent upon us to take strategic multidimensional decisions together with the Council, including military and non-military measures, with a view, inter alia, to allowing the Congolese Government to ensure and assume security and State authority throughout the national territory, good governance, the consolidation of the rule of law and the economic development of the country.

We call on friendly countries and our partners to be well aware of the fact that the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are entering a new transition in their partnership for the country's renewal. In this new phase, we will undoubtedly need to have a dialogue, but above all we will need to adapt in the light of how the situation on the ground develops and on the basis, let me reiterate, of the principles of ownership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, first and foremost, and of the subsidiarity of international cooperation.

Thirdly, given that stabilization and the consolidation of peacebuilding for the Democratic Republic of the Congo are a priority overriding all other priorities, the time has come to move to a new stage, that of economic recovery after several years of war. In that area as in all others, as the Minister for International and Regional Cooperation urged so eloquently in the Council on 18 May,

> "however essential it may be, all future assistance from the United Nations, and MONUSCO in particular, [should] be conceived and organized in a way that makes full use of the investments made by the international community. In this way, we can end the crisis of legitimacy, relaunch the economy and rebuild a State in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — in other words, capitalize and build on the remarkable if still precarious results that we have achieved in this area" (*S/PV.6539, p. 6*).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is already benefiting from a Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas and from an International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, which targets the province of North Kivu and has been extended to the districts of Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele in Province Orientale, the Province of Maniema, the district of Nord-Tanganyika in the Province of Katanga, as well as the districts of Sud-Ubangui and Equateur, in the Province of Equateur.

It is our humble opinion that the aspects of economic recovery and social rehabilitation and integration of these stabilization and reconstruction programmes, in particular the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Areas Emerging from Armed Conflict, and the programme drawn up by the United Nations country team that aims at the consolidation and development of the regions of the north and the west which, although free of conflict, are facing the consequences of instability in the north and east of the country, must be revisited and rethought.

It also seems to us just as important to go beyond these programmes. We call on the international community and on friendly countries that wish to do so to come to our country, invest massively and participate in our development and economic recovery. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's potential and its population's vitality allow us to envisage win-win cooperation. Certain countries have already understood this fact. We call on others to join us and help us down that path.

Fourthly, on security sector reform, with respect to the National Police, a request has already been submitted by the Government, but as the Secretary-General freely recognizes in his report, "[p]rogress ... remains limited because of the lack of complementary support by donors to provide the necessary basic equipment" (*S/2011/298, para. 55*). Despite this, we continue to place our trust in MONUSCO for the reform of the National Police, with the short-term goal of training for the police personnel required to provide security for the elections.

Regarding the national army, the bilateral option is preferred and the one for which agreements currently being implemented have already been negotiated and concluded with certain countries. Following the re-opening of military bases — particularly those at Kamina, Kananga, Kindu and Kisangani — the

military school at the Kitona base has been reopened since 24 May to train junior officers in the Congolese army, thanks to funding from the European Union through its mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Officers and juniors officers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) will be trained there by France. We thank that country for its support to security sector reform aimed at building peace and security, which will certainly lead to the establishment of an army that we trust will be republican, loyal and competent.

Fifthly, on the struggle against armed groups, last month one of the 10 Rwandan fugitives still being sought by international justice for their presumed involvement in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Mr. Bernard Munyagishari, was arrested by the FARDC. Other arrests will follow in the framework of the commitment undertaken by my Government to the United Nations, at a pace that will not undermine the restored peace.

Regarding the threat embodied by the Lord's Resistance Army rebel movement, it will be necessary, with the help of the countries that have made a leitmotif of the struggle against that movement — which, we recall, is of Ugandan origin — to step up measures to protect civilians from the atrocities committed by the rebel movement of Mr. Joseph Kony and his henchmen. We believe that all the elements are objectively in place to concretely and significantly reduce or even eliminate that armed group's capacity do to harm as it runs riot in an area stretching across the Central African Republic, Chad, the Sudan, Uganda and my own country. This is possible, and is necessary if we are to make peace a reality.

Generally speaking, we reaffirm that, when it comes to the struggle against armed groups, including Congolese outlaws, significant progress has undoubtedly been achieved in reducing the threat to the security of the population and in improving the Government's management of the security situation. The normalization of relations with neighbouring States continues. Measures have been taken to remove disruptive elements from the borders, although we reiterate the position we have held since February 2001, which has remained unchanged, that any armed foreigner, whoever he may be, should return to his country of origin.

Sixthly and finally, on the issue of justice for the Democratic Republic of the Congo: if we want a true peace, we need to restore truth. I can assure our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters that we have not forgotten the atrocities they have suffered. We have not forgotten those mothers disemboweled at Kabinda, Kasika or Katogota. We have not forgotten the massacres at Makobola, Kasala, Imesse and Kamituga, and still less the images of our sisters buried alive at Mwenga.

We recall that, in its determination to put a definitive end to impunity for serious crimes committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in implementation of the relevant recommendations of the United Nations mapping report of October 2010, the Government has taken the initiative to establish within the Congolese judiciary specialized mixed chambers attached to certain provincial appeal courts with the power to try grave violations of human rights committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

To that end, the Government has submitted to Parliament a bill on the creation of a specialized mixed chamber for the suppression of these crimes. These specialized mixed chambers will have the potential not only to help put an end to impunity, but also to improve victims' access to the justice system and to more generally enhance the capacities and willingness of the national Congolese judiciary to effectively prosecute the most serious international crimes.

Since the bill on the specialized mixed chambers contains specific provisions conferring universal competence to these chambers, we believe that the cooperation of other States, and above all of neighbouring States, would be an important security cordon allowing us to prosecute the perpetrators of grave crimes even once they have fled the crime scene or when the authorities of their respective countries do not wish to prosecute them.

Thus, the specialized mixed chambers, although established by the Congolese legislature under national law, would see their effectiveness and credibility enhanced if they were to receive the firm support of the Security Council. Such support would require the Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, to decide to establish a responsibility and an obligation for Member States to cooperate with the specialized mixed chambers, especially in the arrest and

extradition of suspects. This would be necessary when the absence of cooperation and denial of justice could pose a real threat to international peace and security.

In conclusion, I must voice my Government's thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to all MONUSCO personnel and associated civilian and humanitarian personnel for their tireless efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in my country. To all, I reiterate the full gratitude of my Government for their total devotion to the cause of peace and to restoring the dignity of the Congolese people.

To Mr. Ban Ki-moon, I say that His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, welcomed the announcement early this week that the Secretary-General would seek a second five-year term at the head of our universal Organization. Our President echoes the emerging unanimity on the subject of the Secretary-General's tireless commitment and leadership in spheres as varied as gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, international peace and security, development, United Nations system reform and strengthening multilateralism. Our Head of State assures the Secretary-General of his support for his candidature — the candidature of a man of his word who has devoted particular attention to and interest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to which he has shown every consideration.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has not forgotten that, in January 2007, just a few days after assuming office, the Secretary-General reserved his very first official visit for our country, followed by others in November 2008, February 2009 and June 2010. This undoubtedly reflects the Secretary-General's constant devotion to working for peacebuilding in my country.

Once again, my country thanks him for his personal investment in the quest for a lasting solution to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for having spared no effort to enable the universal Organization to help the young Congolese democracy to reach its full potential and the Congolese people to realize their political and socio-economic aspirations. The Democratic Republic of the Congo therefore remains convinced that, during his second mandate, the issue of the Congo will be brought to a close.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I would like, if I may, to give you a little wink. I recall that on 13 June, next Monday, the Secretary-General will be celebrating his birthday. What better birthday present could the Security Council offer him under your presidency than to renew its trust in him between now and then?

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his statement. The message is of course directed to all members of the Security Council, not just the President.

There are no more speakers inscribed on my list. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.